

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
OMBUDS OFFICE
FOR THE PERIOD
JULY 1, 2009 TO JUNE 30, 2010**

**Presented at the
707th Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
May 5, 2011**

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University Ombudsperson
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OVERVIEW

The Ombuds Office was established by the Board of Trustees (Trustee Document T70-025, Fall, 1969) as a neutral, confidential agency available to assist any member of the larger University community with a University-related problem--generally problems that had not been resolved through normal channels, or for which there are no well-defined normal channels. It can provide information and advice at any stage of a problem. When someone does not know how to handle a situation, he/she can survey the resources that are available in the University, and explore possible options for action under existing policies and procedures. The cases the office deals with run the gamut from academic problems to personnel issues to administrative problems to complaints of harassment and discrimination. Initial discussions in the Ombuds Office are treated as confidential to the extent that the law allows and decisions about what to do are made by the person (or persons) who contacted the office, in consultation with office staff. In addition to offering advice, the Ombuds Office can investigate a situation, make recommendations, and negotiate resolutions, informally mediate conflicts and issue reports, depending on what seems appropriate in a given situation. Often visitors simply want advice and help in exploring strategies for handling their problems by themselves. At times, such exploration results in a decision to drop issues after discussion has clarified the situation and their options. The Ombuds Office provides staff for any department or work group of the University that wishes to undertake a group discussion of issues that are dealt with by the Ombuds Office.

With respect to the issue of sexual harassment, confidential discussion is available in the Ombuds Office as to the nature of sexual harassment and the University policy that addresses it. After an informal discussion, an individual who concludes that he/she has been subjected to sexual harassment would be referred to an appropriate University reporting point to place the University on notice.

The Faculty Senate and the Trustees are to be commended for the extraordinary job they have done in preserving structural integrity and autonomy of the office. The Ombuds Office could not function without the assurance from the upper administration that such autonomy would be the policy. Ombuds staff, as well as clients, respect the hands-off policy as it leads to a dimension of trust that could not otherwise be developed.

APPOINTMENTS

The Ombuds Office is open from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P. M. In addition, the staff is very willing to attend meetings with faculty, staff, and students in residence halls, classrooms, or other locations convenient to our visitors. When possible, walk-ins are seen but most visitors call ahead for an appointment. Communication with some visitors may take place entirely through e-mail or telephone discussions. Although a personal meeting is the preferred method, some people are unable to come to the campus for such a meeting and are accommodated accordingly.

ACADEMIC HONESTY OFFICE

The Ombuds Office has also been designated as the Academic Honesty Office. As such, we process all cases of academic dishonesty and offer advice to both students and faculty about the University Academic Honesty Policy and the procedures related to handling either an informal resolution or a formal charge of dishonesty. We strongly encourage departments to arrange a session with one of the staff to review the Policy. Faculty are encouraged to contact the office whenever a case of dishonesty is discovered and a staff member will review the policy and outline the procedures. Faculty should note that all cases of dishonesty and recommended sanctions must follow the official Academic Honesty Policy as it is the only policy that is recognized on this campus.

STAFFING

The permanent staff of the Ombuds Office consists of the University Ombudsperson, Assistant Ombudsperson, a full-time administrative assistant and one graduate intern during the school year. Catharine Porter currently serves as Ombudsperson. From March/2009 until March/2010, the Assistant Ombudsperson position was vacant. In March/2010, Martha Patrick joined the team, after serving as the University Community Relations Director. Kay Politella is the Administrative Assistant. The Ombuds Office continues to promote its services to the campus community and raise the awareness of students, staff, and faculty that there is a place for them to come for advice and counsel. Staff is always on hand at various information fairs for students and employees, providing information about the services available and will continue to work on outreach to the campus.

Clients Served (483)

<i>Employees</i>	
Classified Employee	25
Faculty	55
Professional	39
03 Employee	3
Sub-total	122

<i>Others</i>	
Alumnus/a	5
Off-campus	13
Parent	30
Unknown	63
Sub-total	111

<i>Graduate Students</i>	
Masters	17
Doctoral	22
Other	0
Unknown class	1
Non-degree	2
Sub-total	42

<i>Undergraduate Students</i>	
Freshman	18
Sophomore	50
Junior	42
Senior	89
Unknown	1
Sub-total	200

<i>Other Students</i>	
Inactive	3
Special	2
Continuing Education	3
Sub-total	8

Types of Grievance (556)

<i>Academic</i>	
Admission to Program	7
Admission to Course	7
Course Requirements	14
Degree Requirements	13
Program Requirements	12
Grade Disputes	72
Grading Policy & Practice	42
Academic Honesty Question	36
Exam Policy	18
Academic Discipline	1
Late Drop/Retro Withdrawal	13
Student/Teacher	46
Learning Disability	3
Continuation in Program	8
Miscellaneous Academic	63
Sub-total Academic	355

<i>Diversity</i>	
Discrimination	1
Harassment	10
Racial Harassment	1
Sexual Harassment	1
Gender Harassment	0
Interpersonal Conflict	4
Conflict of Interest	0
ADA non-compliance	0
Miscellaneous Civility	8
Sub-total Diversity	25

<i>General Miscellaneous</i>	
General Miscellaneous	27
Sub-total General Miscellaneous	27

<i>Administration</i>	
Health Fee/Coverage	6
Medical Judgment	0
Financial Aid	7
Housing Assignment	7
Administrative Discipline	4
Parking Enforcement/Assignment	4
Bursar/Billing	15
Meal Plan	3
Eviction/Housing Removal	0
Miscellaneous Administrative	15
Sub-total Administration	61

<i>Personnel</i>	
Termination	9
Assessment/Evaluation	2
Appointment/Reappointment	2
Misuse of Authority	1
Student Employment	1
Payroll	0
Working Conditions	8
Supervisor/Employee	29
Employee/Employee	14
Promotion/Demotion	4
Salary	3
Miscellaneous Personnel	15
Sub-total Personnel	88

Action Taken (628)

Advice Only	116
Information with Referral	91
Investigation with Information	214
Expedited	72
Mediated (Informal)	87
Mediated (Formarl)	3
Negotiated Settlement	22
Other	23
Sub-total	628

Disposition (489)

Resolved	343
Unresolved	28
Unknown	19
Formal Hearing	14
Withdrawn	0
In Process	9
Other	5
No Client Follow-Up	71
Sub-total	489

Academic Honesty (232)

Consultations	36
Formal Charges	24
<i>Appeals</i>	6
<i>Charge Upheld</i>	3
<i>Charge Overturned</i>	3
Informal Resolutions	166
Sub-total	232